

# The Voice

Rhonda Johnson, President

[www.ceahio.org](http://www.ceahio.org)

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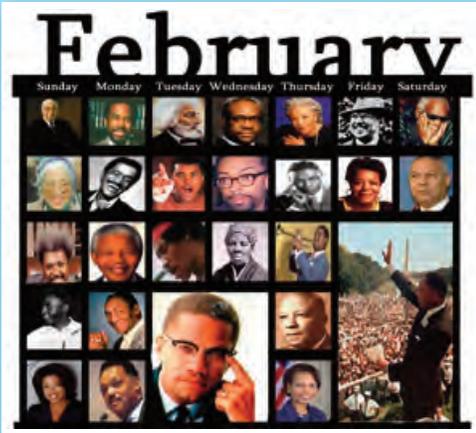
Columbus Education Association

February 1, 2010

## Black History Month

### Rich in great lessons for our students

February is Black History Month and a time for schools across the country to focus on the accomplishments of African-Americans and the progress made to improve conditions for all people, regardless of their race. It is easy to understand that observance of the month is important because we can teach students about the contributions of African Americans—a group that was overlooked for so long, and in some cases continues to be.



As educators, we can make this month-long celebration come alive for our students. All we have to do is look back on our 31st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Dinner as a starting point. Each speaker that evening made observations that can be instructive in our classrooms.

*Don't let go of your dreams.* Ed Gordon, a national news-caster and founder of a nonprofit organization focusing on strengthening black family life, used the Obama election as an example of a great stride, election of an African-American president. Gordon emphasized that hard work and faith can achieve many goals and change lives, and that our young people need encouragement to keep realizing that—no matter what background they come from.

*See people as people, and trust your instincts.* Michelle Mills, director of St. Stephens Community House, has proven to all of us that self-respect and mutual understanding—regardless of race or economic background—are the real keys to effective community relations. And these concepts wouldn't have stood a chance without the sweat and blood that have come through years of sacrifice and perseverance among people of all colors.

*Reach out to others and show you care.* Sandra Waters-Holley is dedicated to improving the lives of young people in our community. Waters-Holley has done so through her work as a guidance counselor. She also knows that helping people frequently requires an extra step. The Project Help Clothing Ministry founded by her mother remains Waters-Holley's passion. The project serves people from across the Columbus cultural spectrum.

Want some great teacher-driven class ideas you can use to convey these ideas? Visit [educationworld.com](http://educationworld.com), [nea.org/tools](http://nea.org/tools), and [AmericanIAM.org](http://AmericanIAM.org), a project in collaboration with the National Education Association and journalist Tavis Smiley, radio and TV-show host.

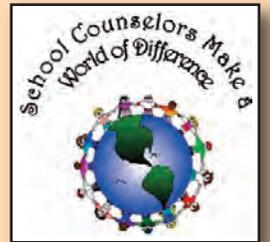
## Thank our guidance counselors

Remember when you filled out your college applications, or reviewed your schedule—or when you had a problem at school and needed someone to talk to? We'll bet you did some or all those things with the help of a school counselor. Now's the time to say, "Thanks!"

National School Counseling Week, sponsored by the American School Counseling Association, is Feb. 1–5. Professional school counselors are certified, experienced educators with master's degrees in guidance counseling. The combination of their training and experience makes them an integral part of the total educational program.

CCS has 122 counselors: 49.5 in high school, 3 in our career centers, 25 in our middle schools and 45 in our elementary schools. Many of them do a number of jobs, including: running IAT and SAIL committees, conducting individual and group counseling sessions, teaching classroom guidance lessons, processing college applications, finding/publicizing/processing scholarship applications, motivating students to get their work done to pass their classes, proctoring tests, attending and conducting career fairs, planning and coordinating honor roll celebrations, coordinating alumni days, conducting college visits, scheduling school speakers, conducting parent meetings, running lunch retention programs to assist with low-achieving students, collecting homework for absent students, assisting in graduation ceremonies, adjusting students' schedules and working with parents and the community.

And that's just a portion of their tireless work. Next time you see your school counselor, say, "thank you."



## We work if CSEA strikes

On Monday, Jan. 25, Columbus City Schools' non-teaching employees voted to reject the latest contract offer by the district. This action by the members of the Columbus School Employees Association (CSEA) also authorizes the union to file a notice of their intent to strike. By law, CSEA must wait at least 10 calendar days after filing the notice before striking. As of the time *The Voice* went to press, CEA did not have information about CSEA's filing of a notice of intent to strike.

Article 106 of the *CEA Master Agreement* contains the Association's continuous performance pledge. It prohibits CEA or its members from causing, initiating, sponsoring or participating in any "strike, study day or other work stoppage." The continuous performance pledge remains in effect for the unexpired term of the *Master Agreement*. The current *Master Agreement* does not expire until Aug. 20, 2011. If CEA or any of its members defy the provisions of this article, violators would be subject to "the appropriate legal

penalties”.

Many members have called to see what they can do to support CSEA members in their buildings. CEA President Rhonda Johnson has reached out to CSEA President B. J. Simmons-Talley to offer support to her unit. Even though we must work and may have to cross picket lines, we should not perform any work normally done by the CSEA bargaining unit. CEA will continue to keep you updated on this matter as details emerge.

## Handle fund raising properly

No one is required to conduct fund-raising activities. But sometimes this is the only method of raising money for special projects or events. So if you have a fund raiser, demand the approval of the principal in writing prior to starting the activity. Follow all the guidelines in the treasurer’s handbook. All money must be deposited every day. All money must go through the treasurer’s office. Funds must be kept separate.

The teacher who sponsors the fund raiser is personally liable for the cost of the products distributed and the potential profits realized.

Don’t take these things lightly. You face consequences when money is not tracked, recorded or collected properly. Not following the rules is the quickest way to end up in a hearing downtown. You could be accused of stealing or negligence. If you have questions about fund raising, see your school treasurer.

## Stressed out? EAP can help

Teaching, especially in an urban school district, is the most stressful job next to being a police officer. You might be interviewing for a new position, in line for a staff reduction, reorganized into an area you have not taught, anxious about leaving your present school and/or be dealing with problems at home. Your adult child might be moving home, your parents might need extended care, you might be the sole breadwinner, you might be getting married. Whatever you might be facing, EAP can help. It is part of the negotiated agreement (Article 815, p. 94).

The provider, People Resources, is set up for in-person, telephone and online assistance and can help you find child- or elder-care, a lawyer or a financial consultant. Your consultation remains confidential. Your principal will NOT know that you called.

To find out more or seek help, call People Resources, 1-800-765-9124. The service is available 24 hours a day, every day. You also can communicate with therapists and read helpful articles by setting up your own account at [www.Worklifestyle-tools.com](http://www.Worklifestyle-tools.com). For questions, call Rick Logan at CEA, 253-4731 or visit [peoplesourceseap.com](http://peoplesourceseap.com).

## Testing changes resulting from House Bill 1

The state has suspended the Writing and the Social Studies Achievement Assessments for two years due to budget constraints. However, if and when they are restored, the Reading and Writing tests will be combined. The Writing and Social Studies tests will remain as part of the OGT.

After the Grade 3 Reading OAT was administered this October, the state changed its name to Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA). OAA and OGT test results have been reported in five categories: Limited, Basic, Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced. Beginning in the next year or so, the number of categories is going to be reduced to three. This could affect the performance index score, although ODE is trying to minimize the effects of this change. ODE has been releasing up to 40 percent of each spring’s OAT test items and will continue to do so. However, the release of the OGT

items has been suspended.

At the same time, House Bill 1 outlines a system that will be a replacement for the OGT. CEA will bring you more information as we receive it.

## What if you became ill and had no leave left?

Each year some of our colleagues experience devastating illnesses and injuries that require long recovery periods. That’s why we have a catastrophic sick leave bank. An employee who has a life-threatening illness may receive as many as 45 donated days if approved by the Joint Sick Leave Committee. We encourage you to donate days to help those in need.

CEA members are in need of donations now. To donate to a specific person, enter your name at the top of the CCS “Report of Employee Absence” form. In the “Comments” section add the words, “Catastrophic Sick Leave Donation” and write in the name of the intended recipient. If you are going to make a general sick leave donation, used for anyone who needs it, fill out the form with “Catastrophic Sick Leave Donation” in the comments section. Be sure that you and your supervisor have signed the form. We have been experiencing a shortage of donated days for more than a year.

## CEA elections

On Feb. 4, the candidates’ names will be final. You’ll have a slate of candidates for CEA President; CEA Vice President; Governors for Districts 2, 7, 9 and 10; 2010 NEA delegates; and 2010–11 OEA delegates. Candidates will conduct campaigns from Feb. 5–19. Voting will take place from Feb. 22–Mar. 8. The Elections Committee will tabulate votes on Mar. 9.

Call the CEA Office at 253-4731 to request a declaration form for any of the above positions. Forms must be returned to CEA by 5 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 4.

## Special notes

- ❑ **OEA new teacher forums: Early-career OEA/CEA members** are invited to the Region 1 New Teacher Forum on **Mar. 22** at the **Crowne Plaza North**. Join us for a fun, informative evening with food, gifts and information. Contact **Debbie Roberts** at (800) 282-1500, Ext. 3116, or [robertsd@ohea.org](mailto:robertsd@ohea.org).
- ❑ **Today (Feb. 1)** is the deadline to notify CCS of your retirement and be eligible for **super severance**. You already receive the value of half of your personal leave days when you retire, but if you file by today, you could receive additional monies for your sick leave.
- ❑ **Secure your career. Apply for a continuing contract by Friday, Mar. 5.** Eligibility depends upon the number of years spent teaching in our district and number of additional credit hours you have accrued and type of license/certificate. Contact Cheryl Creamer at 635-5658 or call CEA if you have questions.
- ❑ **Article 211 training** for principals/supervisors and faculty representatives will be held at Northgate Center, Room G, on the following dates: Divisions I & II, Feb. 2, 9–11:30 a.m.; Divisions III & IV, Feb. 2, 1–3:30 p.m.; High Schools, Feb. 4, 8–10:30 a.m.; and Dist. Program Offices, Feb. 4, 1–3:30 p.m.
- ❑ **IRS deductions for union dues:** Some CEA members may be able to deduct a portion of their union dues on their income tax returns. If you are a **full-time employee** and are on **Pay Plan A** (21 Pays), you can deduct **\$778.02**. If you are on **Plan B** (26 Pays), the amount is **\$777.31**. If you have **switched from Plan A to B**, the amount is **\$724.20** and if you **moved from Plan B to A**, **\$831.13**. **Half-time employees** on **Plan A** (21 Pays) can deduct **\$437.18** and **Plan B** (26 Pays) would allow a **\$437.18** deduction.